

IN THE CLAIMS

1-24. (Canceled)

25. (Currently Amended) A method of installing gaiters around a range of joints defined between joint members having different dimensions, the method comprising the steps of providing a range of gaiters having different dimensions in which each end portion of at least one gaiter of the said gaiter range incorporates a respective single annular fitting section or channel, the range of joint dimensions being greater than the range of gaiter dimensions and at least some of the gaiters in said gaiter range being permanently stretchable to a diameter which is 115% of the respective unstretched end portion diameter in order to fit two or more joints of the said joint range so the said joint range can be accommodated by the range to fit a particular joint and applying respective gaiters around the joints such that two or more joints of different dimensions have applied thereto gaiters having the same dimensions and which are stretchable as aforesaid.

26. (Currently Amended) A method of installing gaiters around a range of joints defined between joint members having different dimensions, the method comprising the steps of providing a range of gaiters having different dimensions, of the kind having a tubular body part and opposite end portions each tapered in a direction away from the body portion, for use with a range of joints of different dimensions, the range of joints being greater than the range of gaiter dimensions and at least some of the gaiters in said gaiter range being permanently stretchable to a diameter which is 115% of the respective unstretched end portion diameter in order to fit two or more joints of the said joint range and applying respective gaiters around the joints such that two or more joints of different dimensions have applied thereto gaiters having the same dimensions and which are stretchable as aforesaid.

27. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 wherein each joint is defined between first and second members and each gaiter of the said range of gaiters comprises a flexible tubular body having first and second end portions and a central portion therebetween the said end portions being configured for secure attachment to respective first and second joint members.

28. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 26 wherein each joint is defined between first and second members and each gaiter of the said range of gaiters comprises a flexible tubular body having first and second end portions and a central portion therebetween the said end portions being configured for secure attachment to respective first and second joint members.

29. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which each gaiter incorporates a central portion having folds therein to permit axial extension of the gaiter body.

30. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which the gaiter range includes at least one gaiter having a plurality of seating channels at one or each end portion.

31. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which at least one gaiter of the gaiter range is dimensioned to fit exactly, without any substantial stretching of the gaiter, one or more of the range of joints while also being stretchable to fit other joints in the joint range.

32. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which a wall of said at least one gaiter is configured and dimensioned to provide the requisite stretch characteristics for a given range of joint member dimensions.

33. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which at least one gaiter has a wall having throughout, a maximum thickness of approximately 3mm.

34. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which at least one gaiter has stretch characteristics to accommodate the process of fitting the gaiter.

35. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which one or more gaikers in the gaiter range have a wall thickness of approximately 2mm.

36. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which at least one gaiter may be formed from a synthetic rubber compound formulated to provide a minimum stretch of 550% at break.

37. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which at least one gaiter has stretch characteristics to accommodate prolonged installation in position about a joint.

38. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which at least one gaiter may be formed from a synthetic rubber compound and wherein one or both end portions of at least one gaiter are permanently stretchable to a diameter which is 115% of the respective (unstretched) end portion diameter, wherein the stretching of the gaiter results in no more than a 10% change in the properties of the rubber compound.

39. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which at least some of the gaiters in the said gaiter range are formed from a synthetic rubber compound which is formulated so that the gaiter is also compressible to fit two or more joints of the joint range.

40. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which one or both end portions of at least one gaiter of the gaiter range are radially compressible.

41. (Canceled)

42. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which said one or both end portions are radially compressible, such that the compressed end portion and, in particular, the pertaining fitting section retains a substantially circular cross-section.

43. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which each gaiter of the range is stretchable in all directions, and is at least stretchable longitudinally and transversely relative to the longitudinal axis of the gaiter.

44. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which said end portions of one or more gaiters of the gaiter range incorporate one or more internal or external ribs or beads which extend wholly or partially around the circumference of a respective end portion of said one or more gaiters.

45. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which the wall thickness of the gaiters in the gaiter range is constant.

46. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 25 in which one or more gaiters of the range incorporate a gaiter wall which varies in thickness to alter the flexing characteristics of the respective gaiter(s).

47. (Previously Presented) A gaiter suitable for use in the method of Claim 25 wherein the gaiter is stretchable to fit two or more joints of a joint range.